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## **See Something, Say Something IEMA Reminds Parents, Students, Schools about the Availability of Safe2Help Illinois**

*24/7 program encourages students to confidentially share school  
safety concerns*

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Emergency Management Agency, and local emergency managers throughout the state, are reminding students, parents and community members about a new program and free resources available to help improve school safety in Illinois.

Safe2Help Illinois is a free information sharing platform that is available 24/7. In the absence of a trusted adult, students can use a free app, text/phone, or the website ([Safe2HelpIL.com](https://Safe2HelpIL.com)) to share school safety issues in a confidential environment. Information obtained by Safe2Help Illinois will remain confidential to ensure student privacy and to protect the integrity of the program. This program is not intended to suspend, expel or punish students; rather, the goal is to encourage students to “Seek Help Before Harm.”

Safe2Help Illinois is a free, voluntary program offered to public and private schools (grades K-12) in Illinois. Regardless of whether a school district is enrolled in the program, Safe2Help staff will vet all information received and forward to the appropriate local contact whether or not they elect to formally participate in the program.

In the wake of the deadly school shooting at Oxford High School in Michigan, Illinois schools have experienced an uptick in school threats. [Public reports](#) indicate there have been 30 school shootings (nationwide) this year, with 22 occurring since August 1, including one in the Chicagoland area on October 12<sup>th</sup>.

“In almost every case involving a mass school shooting there was someone, usually a fellow student, who had some advance warning or reason to believe that violence was possible,” **said Alicia Tate-Nadeau, Director of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency.** “In this era of social media prevalence, students are our eyes and ears, and they are our greatest tools in this school safety initiative. Through Safe2Help Illinois we are working together to empower students. If you see something on social media, if you hear someone making threats, Safe2Help Illinois is available 24-hours a day. In the absence of a trusted adult, Safe2Help Illinois aims to help today’s youth seek help before harm.”

### **Expanding School Safety in Illinois**

Safe2Help Illinois is a product of a statewide school safety capability assessment, following the 2018 school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The Illinois Terrorism Task Force convened a School Safety Working Group made up of state and local law enforcement professionals, representatives from statewide education associations, emergency management and mental health professionals to identify school safety issues and come up with practical recommendations to improve our student safety. The cornerstone of the group’s school safety recommendations is the formation of a statewide resource for students, schools and local officials, called Safe2Help Illinois.

Although the origins of the workgroup recommendations intended to address the threat of school violence, the program evolved to provide resources to support a student’s social, behavioral and mental health needs. Statistics from the Illinois Department of Public Health indicate that suicide is the third leading cause of death of Illinois youth ages 10-19. Additionally, prior to the onset of COVID-19, similar school safety initiatives throughout the nation found the two most common issues of concern have been threats of suicide and bullying. This holds true in Illinois. Of the public interactions received by Safe2Help Illinois to date, the top two concerns have been bullying and suicidal ideation, respectively.

### **Call to Action**

Safe2Help Illinois is encouraging all Illinois parents to talk to their school-age children about the importance of a trusted adult. Trusted adults are people whose words and actions make you feel safe, and these individuals (parents, teachers, coaches, mentors, etc.) can help you and/or your friends seek help before harm.

Recognizing that not all students may feel safe talking to their parents, teachers, coaches or mentors, now is a great time to introduce them to Safe2Help Illinois. It’s free, confidential, and always available.